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HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE EAST TIMORESE REFUGEES

Why rely on Government elites when you can build effective people-to-people links in direct action?

The ***Sanctuary Network*** is a register of over 2 000 individuals and organisations who have pledged to defy Federal law and hide East Timorese asylum seekers if their bids for refugee status are rejected. Initiated by Catholic nuns, the *Sanctuary Network* challenges the Government to honour its moral commitments to East Timorese people seeking refuge in Australia. We want to have 4 000 Australians offering sanctuary.

Neighbourhood watch . . .

40 000 East Timorese people lost their lives while harbouring Australian troops in WWII. Since then, a third of the original population have died as a direct result of the Indonesian invasion in 1975. Despite 10 UN resolutions and international condemnation, the violent repression highlighted by the Dilli massacre of 1991, remains:

Torture and ill-treatment have continued to be the centre piece of a strategy for silencing real and suspected political opponents and for extracting political intelligence through intimidation and coercion. Extra-judicial executions have been reported while the fate of those killed or 'disappeared' in past years have yet to be clarified.
source: Latest Amnesty International. Report: *East Timor -Who is to blame?* July 1994

Network power!

The *Sanctuary Network* is now being promoted by secular activists as a powerful grass roots humanitarian project. The role of the *Network* is first to discourage Government deportation action and then, if necessary, to intervene in any deportation attempt through civil disobedience. As the *Network* grows, so too does the physical and political cost of a Government decision to try and forcibly deny refuge to East Timorese in Australia. Leaked information suggests that the *Network* is already helping to shift the Government's position. The *Sanctuary Network* provides a practical and effective option for direct action to the many Australians who are concerned about the Government's support of the Indonesian regime.

Australia - neighbour in betrayal

Australia's pursuit of a 'special relationship' with Indonesia has seen East Timorese independence efforts treated as a threat to perceived Australian trade, investment, resource development and defence interests.

This policy of appeasement now includes the recent Government recommendations to deport 1300 East Timorese refugees to Portugal. Seeking to avoid assisting refugees from East Timor in Australia, the Government is arguing that Portugal, as the former colonial power, should be the first port of refuge to the asylum seekers. Hypocritically, the Government also maintains that Portugal has no connection to the Timor Sea - leaving Australia and Indonesia free to exploit its rich oil reserves. Trading human rights for a partnership with a powerful regime, the Australian Government is defining East Timorese people as Portuguese citizens on an Indonesian island.

Being a part of the Network . . .

Sanctuary Network members have offered either their residences as potential refuges or have pledged other resources including food, transport, finance or publicity to the project. New membership details are periodically forwarded to the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Immigration as a

demonstration ~~of~~ public support for the refugees (members wishing to remain anonymous appear on public record in numerical form only).

The refugees have a number of legal avenues to explore before deportation could become a threat. Hence it is not anticipated that any activation of the *Network* would occur for at least several months.

Legal Implications

In the worst case scenario the act of harbouring a refugee could be considered as 'obstructing' immigration procedures carrying a (maximum) penalty of six months imprisonment. However, given the numbers of people involved and the political sensitivity of the issue, we consider it highly unlikely that such legal action would betaken.

So, you would like to help?

Join the *Sanctuary Network* by filling out the declaration (you will receive updates on the refugee situation and the *Network's* progress).

Help us expand it through linking with other organisations and publicity. **For more information or to help, phone Ben Moore on 9531 7757**

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The Sanctuary Network Declaration

Send to: Sanctuary Network (Melb.) 15 Glenhuntly rd. Elwood 3184

I/We..................................(name of individual or organisation) offer this contribution to the sanctuary of the 1,300 East Timorese threatened with deportation by the Australian Government.

DECLARATION

My/Our declaration of sanctuary is a clear NO to the Government's recommendation to the Australian Refugee Revue Tribunal *to deport 1,300 East Timorese refugees in Australia.*

RATIONALE

It is a tragic reality that these East Timorese people have fled a genocide that our Federal Government has been complicit in creating - diplomatically, economically and militarily.

I/We remember how 40,00 East Timorese were killed by Japanese forces while offering sanctuary to Australian troops in World War Two.

UNDERTAKING

I/We undertake this non-violent step as a challenge to the Australian Government to reverse its policy on these deportations and provide sanctuary.

I/We stand willing to offer the following support

☐ *residence as refuge* ☐ *food, transport or finance* ☐ *other ....*

in solidarity with any East Timorese resisting these deportations.

Signed,.................................

☐ *I/We wish to remain anonymous to the Government*